

Madam Speaker, I rise today to honor Irene Blessing, who will be celebrating her 100th birthday on November 23, 2019. Irene is the oldest living female veteran in Vanderburgh County, having served as an Army nurse in World War II.

Born the daughter of a World War I Navy veteran, Irene felt the call to serve her country after the United States was drawn into World War II. After enlisting on May 26, 1943, she made her way to the 228th Army Hospital in Sherborne, England. Her most trying moments in the hospital came in the wake of D-Day. After being woken up by the deafening noise of airplane engines overhead, Irene and the rest of the hospital staff began receiving patients two days later. The incoming flow of patients was so steady that the hospital hardly had time to do the laundry. Despite the stressful circumstances, Irene served with distinction and honor, providing quality care for wounded Allied soldiers. She and her fellow nurses also graciously treated wounded German prisoners-of-war. When asked retrospectively about the hospital's treatment of German soldiers, she said, "They were people, and we had to do it." After two years of service, Irene was honorably discharged.

Irene's dedicated service has inspired Hoosiers and fellow Midwesterners throughout her life, especially her own family. Her two sons, Arthur and Paul Midle, followed her footsteps into the armed forces, serving in the Marine Corps and the Air Force respectively.

Madam Speaker, it gives me great pleasure today to recognize Irene on her great milestone. On behalf of Indiana's 8th District, I wish her well and I thank her for her service to our country.